

Ellen G. White 1914 Sign Of The Times

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One of the Greatest Temptations

A Sympathizer Clothed with Power—He Gives Victory over Drunkenness by Providing Control of the Appetite

One of the strongest temptations that man has to meet, comes upon the point of appetite. In all ages, temptations appealing to the physical nature have been most effectual in corrupting and degrading mankind. Through intemperance, Satan works to destroy the mental and moral powers that God gave man as a priceless endowment; and it is impossible for those who yield to him, to appreciate things of eternal worth. Through sensual indulgence, Satan seeks to blot from the soul every trace of likeness to God.

Through Indulgence of Appetite

It was through the temptation to indulge appetite, that Adam and Eve fell from their holy and happy estate. It seemed a small matter to our first parents to transgress the command of God in that one act—the eating from a tree that was so beautiful to the sight, and so pleasant to the taste; but it broke their allegiance to God, and opened the gates to a flood of guilt and woe. And it is through the same temptation that the race have become enfeebled. Since the first surrender to appetite, mankind have been growing more and more self-indulgent, until health has been sacrificed on the altar of appetite. The inhabitants of the antediluvian world ate and drank till the indulgence of depraved appetite knew no bounds, and they became so corrupt that God could bear with them no longer. They filled up the cup of their iniquity, and by a flood He cleansed the earth of its moral pollution.

Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing, a conqueror, over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has made it possible for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us discouraged and intimidated by the assaults of the enemy. “Be of good cheer,” He says; “I have overcome the world.”

When Struggling Against the Power of Appetite

Let him who is struggling against the power of appetite, look to the Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. See Him in His agony upon the cross, as He exclaimed, “I thirst.” He has endured all that it is possible for us to bear. His victory is ours.

Those who would have clear minds to discern Satan’s devices, must bring appetite under the control of reason and conscience. If we would see the standard of virtue and godliness exalted, we must control appetite, the indulgence of which counteracts the force of truth and weakens the power to resist temptation. The heart can not maintain consecration to God while lustful appetite is indulged.

One of the most deplorable effects of the original apostasy was the loss of man’s power of self-control. Only as this power is regained, can there be real progress.

He Would Enfeeble the Body

The body is the medium through which mind and soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. His success here means the surrender to evil of the whole being. The tendencies of our physical nature, unless under the dominion of a higher power, will surely work ruin and death.

The body is to be brought into subjection. The higher powers of the being are to rule. The passions are to be controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God. The kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace, is to bear sway in our lives.

The Essential Power

Apart from divine power, no genuine reform can be effected. Human barriers against natural and cultivated tendencies are but as the sand-bank against the torrent. Not until the life of Christ becomes a vitalizing power in our lives can we resist the temptations that assail us from within and from without.

When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood. Obedience to God is liberty from the thralldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. Man may stand conqueror of himself, conqueror of his own inclinations.

Awaken to Self-Mastery

The requirements of God must be brought home to the conscience. Men and women must be awakened to the duty of self-mastery, the need of purity, freedom from every depraving appetite and defiling habit. They need to be impressed with the fact that all their powers of mind and body are the gift of God, and are to be preserved in the best possible condition for His service.

In that ancient ritual which was the gospel in symbol, no blemished offering could be brought to God's altar. The sacrifice that was to represent Christ must be spotless. The word of God points to this as an illustration of what His children are to be,—“a living sacrifice,” “holy and without blemish,” “well pleasing to God.”

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Surpassing Love Revealed in His Plan

When the Note of Discord Came In—An Eternal Plan Was Ready—Angels Had Seen No Escape—He So Loved that He Gave and Saved

The law of love is the foundation of God's government, and the service of love the only service acceptable to heaven. God has granted freedom of will to all, endowed men with capacity to appreciate His character, and therefore with ability to love Him, and to choose His service. So long as created beings worshiped God, they were in harmony throughout the universe. While love to God was supreme, love to others abounded. As there was no transgression of the law, which is the transcript of God's character, no note of discord jarred the celestial harmonies.

“Kept in Silence from Times Eternal”

But known unto God are all His works, and from eternal ages the covenant of grace (unmerited favor) existed in the mind of God. It is called the everlasting covenant; for the plan of salvation was not conceived after the fall of man, but it was that which was “kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith.” Romans 16:25, 26, A. R. V.

Redemption Not an Afterthought

The purpose and plan of grace existed from all eternity. Before the foundation of the world it was according to the determinate counsel of God that man should be created and endowed with power to do the divine will. The fall of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent. Redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam, but an eternal purpose, suffered to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world, but for the good of all the worlds that God had created.

Before Him who rules in the heavens, the mysteries of the past and the future are alike outspread; and God sees, beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, the outworking of His purpose of love and blessing. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, yet righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne.

Made Known in His Love

Through creation and redemption, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character are revealed. By the marvelous display of His love in giving “His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” the character of God is revealed to the intelligences of the universe. Through Christ our heavenly Father is made known as the God of love.

Heaven in Sadness—the Angels Perplexed

When man sinned, all heaven was filled with sorrow; for through yielding to temptation, man became the enemy of God, a partaker of the satanic nature. The image of God in which he had been created was marred and distorted. The character of man was out of harmony with the character of God; for through sin man became carnal, and the carnal heart is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

To the angels there seemed to be no way of escape for the transgressor. They ceased their songs of praise, and throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin sin had wrought. Out of harmony with the nature of God, unyielding to the claims of His law, naught but destruction was before the human race. Since the divine law is as changeless as the character of God, there could be no hope for man unless some way could be devised whereby his transgression might be pardoned, his nature renewed, and his spirit restored to reflect the image of God.

Divine love had conceived such a plan. It was through Satan’s misrepresentation of God’s character that man was led to doubt the reality of His love, and came to look upon God as his enemy. As Satan had done in heaven, so he did on earth,—declared God’s government unjust, the restrictions of His

law unnecessary, and bade men, as he had angels, to throw aside the yoke and let the dictates of their own nature be their only guide and law. He promised liberty; but as he himself is the servant of corruption, he brought the race into bondage to sin, misery, and death. He represented God as claiming all, and giving nothing, as requiring men's service for His own glory, but denying Himself nothing for man's good.

He Alone Could Save

In the work of creation, Christ was with God. He was one with God, equal with Him, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person, the representative of the Father. He alone, the Creator of man, could be his Saviour. No angel of heaven could reveal the Father to the sinner, and win him back to allegiance to God. But Christ could manifest the Father's love; for God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. Christ could be the "day's man" between a holy God and lost humanity, one who could "lay His hand upon us both."

None but Christ could redeem man from the curse of the law. He proposed to take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin,—sin so offensive in the sight of God that it would necessitate separation from His Father. Christ proposed to reach to the depths of man's degradation and woe, and restore the repenting, believing soul to harmony with God. Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, offered Himself as a sacrifice and substitute for the fallen sons of Adam, though in this offering all heaven was involved in infinite sacrifice.

He So Loved that He Gave

But the Father so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that through His smitten heart a channel might be found for the outflowing of infinite love for fallen man. Man had become so degraded by sin, his nature so perverted by evil, that it was impossible for him of himself to come into harmony with God, whose nature is purity and love. But Christ redeemed him from the condemnation of the law, and imparted divine power, and through man's cooperation, the sinner could be restored to his lost estate.

The grace of Christ alone could change the heart of stone to a heart of flesh, make it alive to God, and transform the character, so that a degraded child of sin might become a child of God and heir of heaven. Man had no power to justify the soul, to sanctify the heart. Moral disease could be healed only through the power of the great Physician. The highest gift of heaven, even the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, was able to redeem the lost.

The only hope for the fallen race was found in becoming reconciled to God. Satan had so misrepresented God that man had no true conception of the divine character. Christ came to the world, and in carrying out the plan of salvation, revealed the fact that "God is love."

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Inexpressible Joy

That God Could Redeem Sinners Made Joy in Heaven—The Earth as Well as Man to Be Restored—
The Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World—The Light in Both Dispensations

When the plan of salvation was revealed to the angels, joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. The glory and the blessedness of a world redeemed outmeasured even the anguish of the Prince of life. Through the celestial courts echoed the first strain of that song that angels sang above the hills of Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And the lost pair in the garden of Eden, standing as criminals before the righteous Judge, waiting the sentence their transgression merited, heard the first notes of the divine promise. Before the life of toil and sorrow which sin had brought upon them was depicted before them, before the decree that the wages of sin is death was pronounced, they heard the promise of redemption. Though they must suffer from the power of their mighty foe, still through the merits of Christ they could look forward to victory.

The mystery of the gospel was spoken in Eden, when God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." If Satan could have touched the head with his specious temptations, the human family would have been lost; but the Lord had made known the purpose and plan of the mystery of grace, declaring that Christ had bruised the serpent under His feet.

The Earth As Well As Man to be Redeemed

But not only had man come under the power of the deceiver, but the earth itself, the dominion of man, was usurped by the enemy. Through the plan of salvation, the sacrifice of Christ, not only was man, but his dominion, to be redeemed. Through the merits of Christ, all that man lost through sin was to be restored. The time would come when there would be "no more curse," but the throne of God should be in it, and His servants should serve Him. The promise would be fulfilled, "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever."

A Demonstration to the Universe

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated.

Satan had declared that the law of God was faulty, and that the good of the universe demanded a change in its requirement. In attacking the law, he thought to overthrow the authority of its Author, and gain for himself the supreme allegiance. But through the plan of salvation, the precepts of the law were to be proved perfect and immutable, that at last only glory and love might rise to God throughout the universe, ascribing glory and honor and praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.

To fallen man was revealed the plan of infinite sacrifice through which salvation was to be provided. Nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate man's sin, and Adam marveled at the goodness of God in providing such a ransom for the sinner. Through the love of God, a star of hope illumined the terrible future that spread before the transgressor.

Through the institution of the typical system of sacrifice and offering, the death of Christ was ever to be kept before guilty man, that he might better comprehend the nature of sin, the results of transgression, and the merit of the divine offering. Had there been no sin, man would never have

known death. But in the innocent offering slain by his own hand, he beheld the fruits of sin,—the death of the Son of God in his behalf. He sees the immutable character of the law he has transgressed, and confesses his sin; he relies upon the merits of the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.

Plan of Saving Sinners Ever the Same

The plan of saving sinners through Christ alone was the same in the days of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and in every successive generation that lived before the advent of Christ, as it is in our day. The patriarchs, the prophets, the martyrs from righteous Abel, looked forward to a coming Saviour, and they showed their faith in Him by sacrifices and offerings. The sacrifice of beasts shadowed forth the sinless offering of God's dear Son, and pointed forward to His death upon the cross. But at the crucifixion, type met antitype, and the typical system there ceased.

The Center of Both Dispensations

The Son of God is the center of the great plan of redemption which covers all dispensations. He is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." He is the Redeemer of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam in all ages of human probation. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Christ is the substance, or body, which casts its shadow back into former dispensations. When Christ died, the shadow ceased. At the death of Christ, the typical system was done away; but the law of God, whose violation had made the plan of salvation necessary, was magnified and made honorable.

The gospel was good tidings of great joy to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses; for it presented to them a coming Saviour. A clearer and more glorious light now shines upon the Christian. Those who lived before the coming of Christ, looked forward by faith to His coming. But what had to be grasped by faith by them, is assurance to us; for we know that Christ has come, as foretold by the prophets. It is just as essential for us to have faith in our Redeemer, who came to earth and died our sacrifice, as it was for the ancients to believe in a Redeemer to come, represented by their offerings and sacrifices.

Exchange a Throne for Suffering and Death

In becoming man's substitute, in bearing the curse which should fall upon man, Christ has pledged Himself in behalf of the race to maintain the sacred and exalted honor of His Father's law. He came to convince men of sin, which is the transgression of the law, and through divine mediation bring them back to obedience to God's commandments. God has given the world into the hands of Christ, that He may completely vindicate the binding claims of the law, and make manifest the holiness of every principle.

Christ was the Father's "appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." He was "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." And He upheld "all things by the word of His power." He possessed divine excellency and greatness. It pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell. And Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Yet Jesus exchanged a throne of light and glory which He had with His Father, counting it not a thing to be desired to be equal with God while man was lost in sin and misery. He came from heaven to earth, clothed His divinity with humanity, and bore the curse as surety for the fallen race. He was not

compelled to do this; but He chose to bear the results of man's transgression, that man might escape eternal death.